

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 1-27. (Previously canceled)

28. (Canceled)

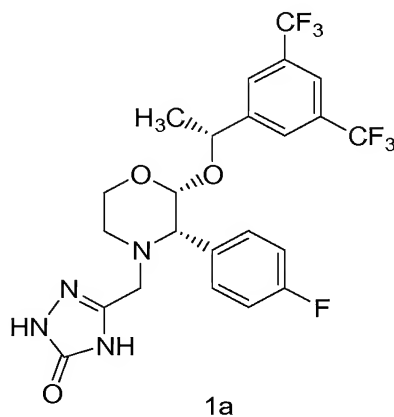
29. (Previously canceled)

30. (Previously canceled)

31. (Previously canceled)

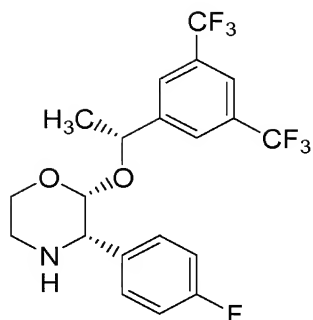
32.- 39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A process for preparing a compound of the formula 1a:



comprising:

reacting the hydrochloride salt of a compound of formula 2a:



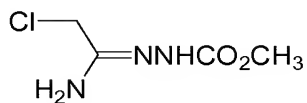
2a

in the presence of:

~~an inorganic base which is selected from the group consisting of: sodium carbonate, cesium carbonate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide and potassium carbonate;~~

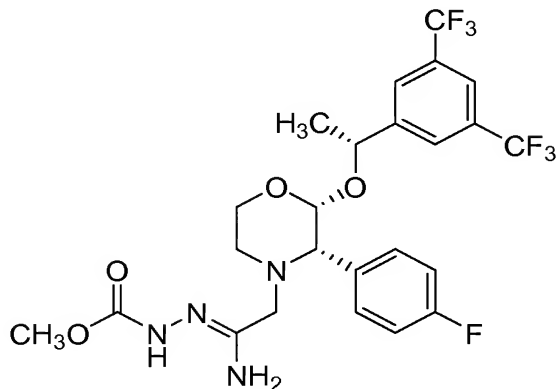
toluene; and

~~a solvent which is selected from the group consisting of: dimethylformamide, dimethylsulfoxide, N-methylpyrrolidone, acetonitrile, N,N-dimethylacetamide and hexamethylphosphoramide;~~  
with a compound of the formula 3:



3

to produce a compound of the formula 4a:



4a

washing the compound of formula 4a with an aqueous salt solution phase;  
drying;

and cyclizing the compound of formula 4a at a temperature of 140-150°C to give the compound of formula 1a.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Canceled)

43. (Canceled)

44. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 43 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains at least one compound selected from the group consisting of: KCl, KHCO<sub>3</sub>, K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and NaCl.

45. (Previously presented) The process of Claim 44 wherein the aqueous salt solution contains KCl.

46. (Canceled).